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Viewing cable 06MANAGUA1523, A/S SHANNON -- LEWITES: LAST MEETING WITH U.S.

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06MANAGUA1523	2006-07-11 15:10	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2758753.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4041/millones-de-dolares-sin-control-y-a-disolucion>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4040/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-venezuela-en-2006>
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<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0735
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 001523

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA A/S SHANNON, WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2016

TAGS: [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [KDEM](#) [NU](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: A/S SHANNON -- LEWITES: LAST MEETING WITH U.S.
OFFICIALS

REF: MANAGUA 01482

Classified By: Ambassador Paul A. Trivelli. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: On June 27, Assistant Secretary Shannon met with Herty Lewites, Sandinista dissident and presidential candidate for the Sandinista Renewal Movement (MRS). Lewites voiced concern about the election process, the lack of MRS poll watchers and continuing problems with national/voter ID cards, especially among the youth. Lewites said the National Assembly elections were more important than the presidential race and would be easier to manipulate. The MRS was focusing attention on the deputy races, but Lewites admitted that a lack of funding was hampering the campaign. Lewites reiterated his support for CAFTA as well as his desire to maintain cordial, constructive, and cooperative relations with the United States. END SUMMARY.

APPEALING TO YOUNGER VOTERS

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¶2. (SBU) MRS deputy candidate Manuel Ignacio Lacayo said a large percentage of the Nicaraguan population is under 18 years of age and has no memory of the Sandinista era. He claimed that the FSLN is actively pursuing the youth vote with success. Lewites' advisor/deputy candidate Victor Hugo Tinoco said the MRS also maintains a large group of sympathizers among Nicaraguan youth and that most have no party affiliation. He believed Lewites' charisma would attract their support, but said the MRS needed to make its message clear -- voting for the MRS was not just an anti-Ortega vote, but a pro-Nicaragua, pro-democracy vote. Lewites said his party was trying to gear their message to youth and show that the MRS was a viable alternative to the Frente. Their core message is that the MRS is a viable alternative within Sandinismo to the Frente.

¶3. (SBU) Lewites and his advisors also reviewed their concerns about the CSE -- they believe that most young people of voting age did not have cedulas. According to Lewites' advisor/deputy candidate Luis Carrion, 80 percent of Nicaraguans without national identity cards are under 25. He said the Consejo Supremo Electoral (CSE) was "just not interested in getting them cedulas."

FOCUS ON THE DEPUTIES

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¶4. (C) Lewites said the "real fight" in the upcoming election would be for control of the National Assembly. A former Peace Corps volunteer was helping MRS with the

campaign and had conducted initial polls that indicated that Lewites could expect to garner 27 to 29 percent of the vote. Given those results, Lewites said the party would focus on the deputy races and on keeping Daniel Ortega from gaining in the polls.

¶15. (C) Lewites told A/S Shannon that one of the challenges in the Assembly race was that Nicaraguans traditionally voted along party lines. Still, there were indications that this trend could shift in this election. He said reaffirmed that if either he or Montealegre won, they would work together to gain a majority of deputies in the National Assembly.

¶16. (C) Lewites said corruption was another challenge. He expressed concern that the vote count for the deputy races would take much longer than the Presidential tally and that it would be easier to manipulate the results. He speculated that a number of challenges ("impugnaciones") could change the results in the departments. His advisors echoed his concerns and spoke about the need to instill an awareness in the deputies elected that they must serve Nicaragua and their community.

BUT NOT WITHOUT FUNDS
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¶17. (C) Lewites' advisors and deputy candidates voiced concern over their lack of campaign funding and the limits it imposed on their ability to reach potential voters. Lacayo said Nicaraguan financiers were hedging their bets between the PLC and FSLN, leaving the MRS at a disadvantage.

RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.
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¶18. (C) A/S Shannon said the U.S. did not have an election favorite, and would support democratic candidates who desire responsible government and constructive relations with the United States. He told Lewites that the U.S. had to act with caution and to clearly underline its support for the Nicaraguan people.

¶19. (C) Lewites asked Shannon what the U.S. planned in Nicaragua for the run-up to the election. Shannon replied that the U.S. wanted to encourage people to vote, and stressed that the process and the commitment to democracy were key, rather than a party's political ideology.

¶10. (C) Lewites concluded by saying that any political visitor to Nicaragua from the United States would make news, but cautioned that such visits did not always resonate with the people. He urged the U.S. to maintain contact with the MRS on strategy, reiterated his interest in maintaining good relations with the U.S., and stressed his commitment to continue his "all out war" against Daniel Ortega.

NOTE
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¶11. (SBU) Lewites died suddenly of a heart attack on July 2 (Reftel). Two days following his unexpected death the MRS proposed on July 4 that vice presidential candidate Edmundo Jarquin ascend to the presidential slot and invited popular revolutionary singer/songwriter Carlos Mejia Godoy to accept the vice presidential candidacy.

¶12. (U) Participants:

Nicaragua:
Herty Lewites
Victor Hugo Tinoco
Luis Carrion
Manuel Ignacio Lacayo
William Tesel
Israel Lewites

U.S.:

Assistant Secretary Tom Shannon
Senior Advisor for Public Diplomacy Maria Tamburri
Ambassador Paul Trivelli
DCM Peter Brennan
Polcouns Victoria Alvarado
Polooff Nicole Chulick (notetaker)

This cable was cleared by A/S Shannon.
TRIVELLI